

FAQs about IDEA 2004

Response to Intervention (RtI)

The IDEA 2004 gives school districts more flexibility in evaluation procedures for determining whether a student has a specific learning disability. Instead of using a discrepancy model to determine eligibility a school district may use a process that determines if the student responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures. This process is frequently referred to as Response to Intervention (RtI).

What is Response to Intervention?

The term “Response to Intervention” is used to describe a systematic problem-solving process within a coordinated system of early intervening services that is designed to allow for early recognition of students’ difficulties and to provide for a data-based method for evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional approaches used. The focus in this process is on the instructional methodologies used rather than on identifying individual student differences. This approach relies upon the use of scientific, research-based instructional practices and frequent assessments or probes to provide the data necessary to make decisions about student progress and the need for more intensive intervention. Generally, a three-tiered model is used to describe the level of intervention. Tier 1 instructional strategies or interventions are those used with an entire classroom or at a schoolwide level. Students for whom the assessment data show little or no growth at this level would then move to Tier 2. Tier 2 interventions are used with small groups of students who have similar instructional needs. Students who do not respond to the small group interventions move on to Tier 3 where they receive instruction designed to meet their specific individual needs.

What types of interventions are required?

IDEA 2004 gives the school district the authority to “use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures” for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability. IDEA does not further define standards for appropriate interventions.

There are some fundamental aspects of intervention design that are important to remember. First, data collection and analysis are critical components of all interventions. These data will allow the team to make a determination about which students need to move to a more intensive level of intervention, target specific skill deficits, and track student learning over time. For students with specific learning disabilities this data will provide the documentation that the interventions have not been effective. Second, well-designed interventions rely on proven instructional methodologies. Lastly, effective interventions are straightforward and can be implemented in the general education classroom. Interventions that are overly complex or require too much effort to maintain will not be implemented effectively and are not likely to produce improved learning on the part of the student. When this happens, it is not evidence that

the student did not respond to the intervention, rather it merely shows that the intervention was not well designed.

In what setting do the interventions occur?

Most of the activities involved in a response to intervention problem-solving approach are implemented by general educators and occur in the general education classroom. The aim of this problem-solving approach is to quickly identify those students who are not benefiting from the whole group instructional model and to implement instructional strategies which will facilitate their academic growth without removing them from the classroom environment.

The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) became effective on July 1, 2005. This list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet is one of a series from the Montana Office of Public Instruction which highlight changes resulting from the reauthorization of the IDEA. Additional changes may result from the final regulations.

If you have further questions, please contact your local special education director or the Montana Office of Public Instruction. A complete listing of current OPI IDEA FAQs can be found at www.opi.mt.gov/speced/FAQs.



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